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LETTER DATED 16 JANUARY 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LEBANON TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to inform you that the Lebanese Government has decided to request the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which expires on 31 January 1995, for a further interim period of six months, on the basis of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 501 (1982), 508 (1982), 509 (1982) and all other relevant resolutions and decisions of the Security Council.

The Government of Lebanon is pleased to report that the national reconstruction and rehabilitation process is proceeding. Efforts to rebuild the new commercial centre in downtown Beirut and to modernize the national infrastructure are ongoing. Priority is being given to basic services such as electricity, telecommunications, transportation, waterworks, schools and hospitals.

My Government is also pleased to report that the command of UNIFIL and the Lebanese authorities continue to coordinate in perfect harmony with the goal of deploying the Lebanese army throughout the southern part of the country up to its internationally recognized boundaries.

Despite these positive developments, however, Israel's occupation of the south and its continued aggression against Lebanon and its citizens remain the major obstacle to national recovery. Repeated violations of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity through constant shelling of villages and towns in the south and aerial bombardments of different parts of Lebanon continue to kill and injure many civilians and to destroy property.

It is most regrettable that Israel, despite its participation in the ongoing Middle East peace process launched in Madrid in October 1991, continues to attack Lebanon by land, sea and air. Furthermore, Israel still refuses to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit hundreds of innocent Lebanese detainees held for years in Israeli jails and the notorious detention camps in Al-Khaim and Marjayoun in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

Lebanon remains wholly committed to the Middle East peace process in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Lebanon agreed to participate in the Madrid Peace Conference and subsequent rounds of negotiations in Washington on the basis of resolution 425 (1978), as was confirmed by the letter of assurances dated 18 October 1991 from the Government of the United States of America, as co-sponsor of the Conference, to the Government of Lebanon. It was Lebanon's clear understanding that the Middle East peace process would provide the framework in which Israel would implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

In view of Israel's continued aggressions against Lebanon and its threat to the peace process, it must be underscored that the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) remains the only way to stop the violence in southern Lebanon. Towards this end, the Council could play a positive role in securing peace for the region by demonstrating the inviolability of its resolutions and taking long overdue measures to implement resolution 425 (1978). This would enable the Lebanese Government to re-establish law and order throughout the entire south of the country by extending its authority up to its internationally recognized boundaries.

The Lebanese Government considers that the operational strength and capacity of UNIFIL should be maintained, with a view to implementing resolution 425 (1978) fully. In this context, UNIFIL represents the international community's commitment to Lebanon and to the restoration of its full sovereignty and territorial integrity. Its support and humanitarian assistance are vital to the civilian population, but cannot be a substitute for the fulfilment of its original mandate as stipulated in resolution 425 (1978). UNIFIL's role as an interim force is to ensure the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and to assist the Government of Lebanon in re-establishing its legitimate and effective authority in the area, through its army and internal security forces.

The Government of Lebanon avails itself of this opportunity to pay tribute to the UNIFIL command, administrators, troops and troop-contributing countries for their noble efforts and sacrifices made in the cause of peace. It expresses deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and his assistants for their tireless efforts, which contribute to the valuable presence of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

I would be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Permanent Representative